

# 1. Introduction

## What is Walker's Point?

Today Walker's Point is one of the city of Milwaukee's most dynamic redeveloping areas. It's also one of the three original communities that founded the city, along with Kilbourntown and Juneautown. George H. Walker claimed land to the south of the Milwaukee River and built a log house in 1834. From the southern edge of today's Downtown to the iconic Rockwell Automation clock tower, Walker's Point's mix of charming historic residential districts, striking new condo and apartment developments, trendy bistros, industrial vibe, and walkable main streets is utterly unique.

## Why do a strategic action plan for Walker's Point?

Walker's Point is also one of five districts in the Near South Side Comprehensive Area Plan (Area Plan), which was approved by the City of Milwaukee ("City") Common Council by Resolution #081715 on May 27, 2009. Pages 87 - 94 are devoted to recommendations for Walker's Point. Three of the plan's ten catalytic projects, on pages 100-104 and 109-110 apply to Walker's Point. The entire plan can be found at:

<http://city.milwaukee.gov/AreaPlans/NearSouth.htm>

Five years, one Great Recession, and a reviving development market later, it's time to take a look at how well the plan is serving the community. Is Walker's Point experiencing some growing pains and new opportunities? Is the Area Plan being implemented as well as it could be? What are the priority actions -- the policies, programs, and projects -- that could further the Area Plan's recommendations for the continuing redevelopment of the district? These could include such things as zoning changes, modified parking regulations, and civic improvements. And finally, are there places where we need to circle back and tweak the Area Plan in light of new trends or opportunities?

## Issues to address

Some issues to address that prompted the commencement of this plan were:

1. Where and what are the parking issues? How can we address them in the short and long term? The Area Plan identified six possible locations for parking

structures. When and where would the first one be built and what is the process for doing that? Can we reserve a location?

2. An arts and entertainment district centered on 5th St. and National Ave. was a catalytic project in the Area Plan. What would that be? Where?
3. Where should more housing be encouraged?
4. What are the opportunities for the large vacant parcels across from Rockwell and between 1st St. and the Kinnickinnic River?
5. The City also examined the question of where to locate a retail center with uses such as a grocer, hardware store, etc. Results of that process will be folded into this plan.
6. Reed St. Yards is also being planned and developed through the Menomonee Valley Area Plan 2.0. Results of the process will also be folded into this plan.
7. Review zoning and the Area Plan looking for discrepancies.

Of course these issues will evolve and grow as the study proceeds.

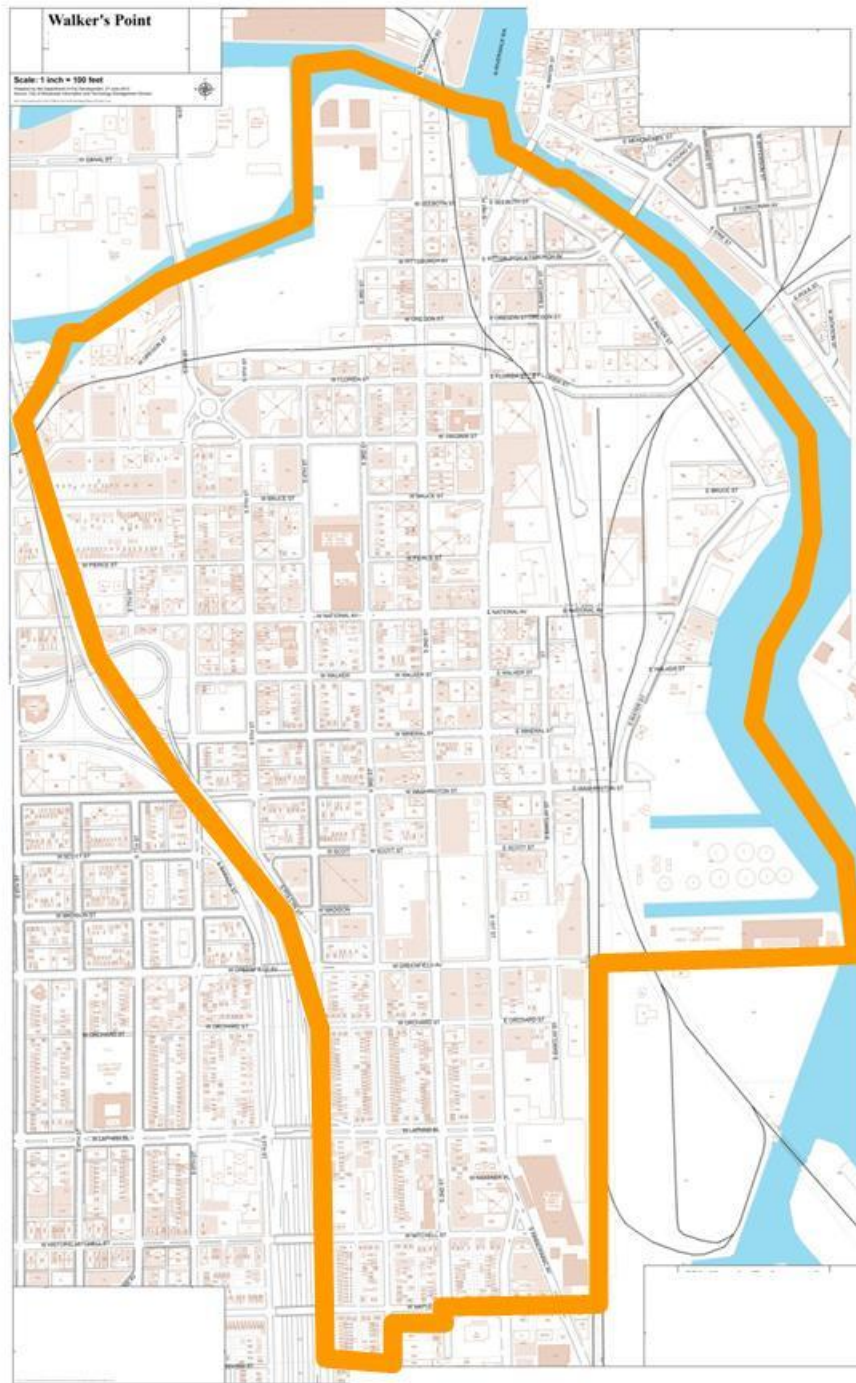
### Study area

The boundaries of Milwaukee's neighborhoods are not officially established. For example, the Milwaukee Neighborhood Identification Project identified boundaries that are quite different from those used in this study.

This plan will use the same boundaries that the Near South Side Plan used to define the Walker's Point district. Starting at the westernmost point of the district, where I-43/94 crosses over the Burnham Canal, the district boundary extends northeast along Burnham Canal to the South Menomonee Canal, northeast and then north to the Menomonee River, east to the Milwaukee River, southeast to the Kinnickinnic River, south to E. Greenfield Avenue, then runs west and south in a stair step pattern to the Canadian Pacific Railroad, E. Maple St., S. 2nd St., the properties on the south side of E. Maple St., S. 3rd St., the properties on the south side of E. Burnham St. to I-43/94 and heading north and then northwest to the starting point. The stair step pattern was used to not divide the businesses comprising the Kinnickinnic River Business

Improvement District #35, which lies outside of Walker's Point's boundary for purposes of this plan.

Fig. \_\_ Walker's Point District



### Getting to know Walker's Point

More information will be provided about Walker's Point in Chapter 2, but no introduction would be complete without mentioning some of the interesting buildings and features that give Walker's Point a sense of place.

Major routes into Walker's Point from downtown include 6th St., 1st St., and Pittsburgh Ave./Young St./Milwaukee St. From the west, arterial routes include National Ave. and Greenfield Ave. Farther south, Lapham Blvd. and Mitchell St. connect to the west. Interstate I-94 / I-43 defines the western edge of the district and provides service, or access, interchanges at National Ave. and Lapham Blvd. Heading south, 1st St. continues to the Southeast Side planning area and the thriving district of Bay View.

An interesting and valuable feature of Walker's Point is that some of these arterials are paired with parallel streets one block away that provide a main street setting for storefront kinds of businesses. 5th St. complements 6th St. with an interesting mix of businesses and non-profits as does National Ave., which connects them. 2nd St. plays a similar role for 1st St., offering a chance to slow down and explore the neighborhood. This is not a very common pattern and provides interesting opportunities for entrepreneurial activity.

The Point On The River is a 12-story condominium building built atop a four-story cold storage building on the very point of Walker's Point. It's address, 106 W. Seeboth St. refers to being able to see both the Menomonee and Milwaukee rivers. It was almost complete in 2008, when it was caught in the Great Recession. Today its 147 condos are totally occupied and provide dramatic views of Downtown and the Milwaukee River. The building, and other multi-family buildings extending east along the Milwaukee River, define the northern edge between Walker's Point and Downtown.

Fig. \_\_ Riverfront development is a gateway to Walker's Point from the north



Walker's Point is also noted as an entertainment district. Some of the trendiest restaurants and bars are located on 2nd St. and on National Ave. These include, in no particular order, The Noble, Braise, Zak's, Ginger, Crazy Water, La Merenda, Blue Jacket and many more. A number of longstanding establishments provide entertainment and social opportunities for Milwaukee's gay community. 5th St. offers an ethnically vibrant and artsy setting for an evening out.

Of course not every community asset is about eating and drinking. A recent newsletter from IFF, a nonprofit community development financial institution, reported some projects that they assisted in Walker's Point:

Patients in need of holistic care receive treatment at Core El Centro in the new Clock Shadow building. Annually, Core El Centro now serves nearly 3,000 clients, of whom 90% are low-income and 79% are Latino. The holistic health center is one of seven nonprofits in Walker's Point to receive over \$7 million in loans from IFF to improve their facilities as well as preserve the area's historic landscape and cultural diversity.

Walker's Point Center for the Arts offers room for an after-school arts program for children and a gallery for local artists.

Seeds of Health acquired and built out the Milwaukee Community Cyber High School. Escuela Verde temporarily relocated within Walker's Point. Both charter schools serve high-need populations. Other projects to receive assistance from

IFF include La Causa, Next Act Theatre, and Radio Milwaukee.

Other notable groups in Walker's Point providing valuable services for Milwaukeeans include Centro Hispano and Arts @ Large.

Public schools in the district include Bradley Tech High School and Vieau Elementary School, La Causa Charter School, and Milwaukee Community Cyber High School.

Ch. 2 will provide more information about recent developments in Walker's Point.

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